

A Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching-brief at School House, Kingsland, Shrewsbury

Nigel Baker BA PhD FSA MCIFA

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Introduction

This document is a W.S.I. (effectively a method statement) for the conduct of an archaeological watching-brief on the construction of a new entrance foyer to School House at Shrewsbury School, Kingsland, Shrewsbury. It is a requirement of Condition 3 of planning permission (**23/05514/FUL**) and follows comments from Shropshire Council Archaeology dated 24-01-2024. The WSI was commissioned from the writer by the site owner's agents (Arrol Architects) in March 2024, and the compilation of the WSI was assisted by a visit to the Historic Environment Record on 21-03-2024 (ref. IR 2355).

The document has two parts. The first is specific to the site and is a brief examination of likely archaeological conditions there and the historical context; the second part is a statement of principles and guidance determining the conduct of watching-briefs in general, together with specific conditions that will be applied to the work by this practice.

Part I: the historical and archaeological background

Kingsland derives its name from its origin as part of the ecclesiastical parish and royal manor of Meole Brace, which Domesday Book recorded as having been held by Edith, widow of Edward the Confessor, in 1066 (DB f.260v). The name Kingsland is first recorded as *Chingeland* in a charter of Shrewsbury Abbey in 1155 when land there was granted to the abbey (Chibnall [ed.] 1975, no.36). 27 acres in extent, Kingsland, a promontory bounded by the Severn to the north and the valley of the Rad Brook to the south and east, was the common property of the Burgesses of Shrewsbury, used as common grazing; at least part of it was cultivated from 1539 and subsequently leased out (Hobbs, 1954, 68). By the late 16th century, like other areas of common land on the town margins, it was also used as a place of execution and was the site of a gallows; in March 1582 the parish clerk of Abbey Foregate was hanged there for forgery (Champion 1994, 95). Whether, as in other places, executed criminals were buried close to hand is not known, nor is the exact location of the gallows.

About 1600, about half a century after the suppression of the old Corpus Christi procession around the town by clergy, town officers and craft guilds, the latter began to congregate annually on the common land at Kingsland in their 'arbours' – basically miniature moated enclosures containing timber buildings dedicated solely to their annual feasts (H.E.R. prn 08161). By the 1680s some of these had become quite substantial structures, the Shoemakers' arbour being given an arched stone gateway in 1679 that was later moved to the Quarry (Champion 1994, 110). The sites of the Shrewsbury Show arbours lie scattered, partly under the school playing fields and partly under private properties on Kennedy Road. The Shrewsbury Show as it was known declined in popularity during the Napoleonic wars, was revived, underwent a short boom period following the arrival of the railway in the late

1840s, with crowds of up to 32,000 attending, but was finally shut down on account of rowdy behaviour in 1878 (Trinder, 2006, 108-110).

In 1650 the Corporation of Shrewsbury ordered the construction of a new Pest House in Kingsland, in replacement of one established earlier at Cadogan's Cross in Frankwell, to accommodate plague victims away from the town centre. A burial ground was attached to it. The site of the Pest House and its burial ground can be identified from the Meole Brace tithe map of the 1840s, which bears the legend 'Sick House, Burial Ground etc' SW of the principal workhouse building, on a site (HER prn MSA 01499) just to the south of the present (late 19th-century) school chapel. In c.1960 human bones were found on the bank below Shrewsbury School in an area approximately below the school chapel (HER prn SSA 5668). They were attributed at the time to the Pest House burial ground, though the latter appears to have been on the flat ground at the top of the slope well away from the edge of the escarpment, so another origin cannot be ruled out.

The institutional use of Kingsland began again with the construction of the Foundling Hospital, built to the design of Thomas Farnolls Pritchard in 1760. The orphans were put to work manufacturing woollen cloth but the enterprise was not a success and the building was adapted for use as a workhouse, the House of Industry, in 1786. Briefly used to accommodate Dutch prisoners taken during the war of 1781-2, from 1821 to 1853 part of it was used as a lunatic asylum. It too had a burial ground, and in 1879 'when levelling the cricket pitch at the New Schools' two gravestones were found, both dated 1832 (Auden 1947-8, 47, 54).

Shrewsbury School, in origin the town grammar school, was founded in the 1550s, prospered, and then after a long period of decline was revived under Samuel Butler in 1798. It was included in the Public Schools Act of 1868 and sought to move to a new site without the constrictions imposed by its ancient buildings on Castle Gates. The Kingsland Workhouse was sold to the governors in 1875 and the school moved to Kingsland in April 1882 (Trinder 2006, 111).

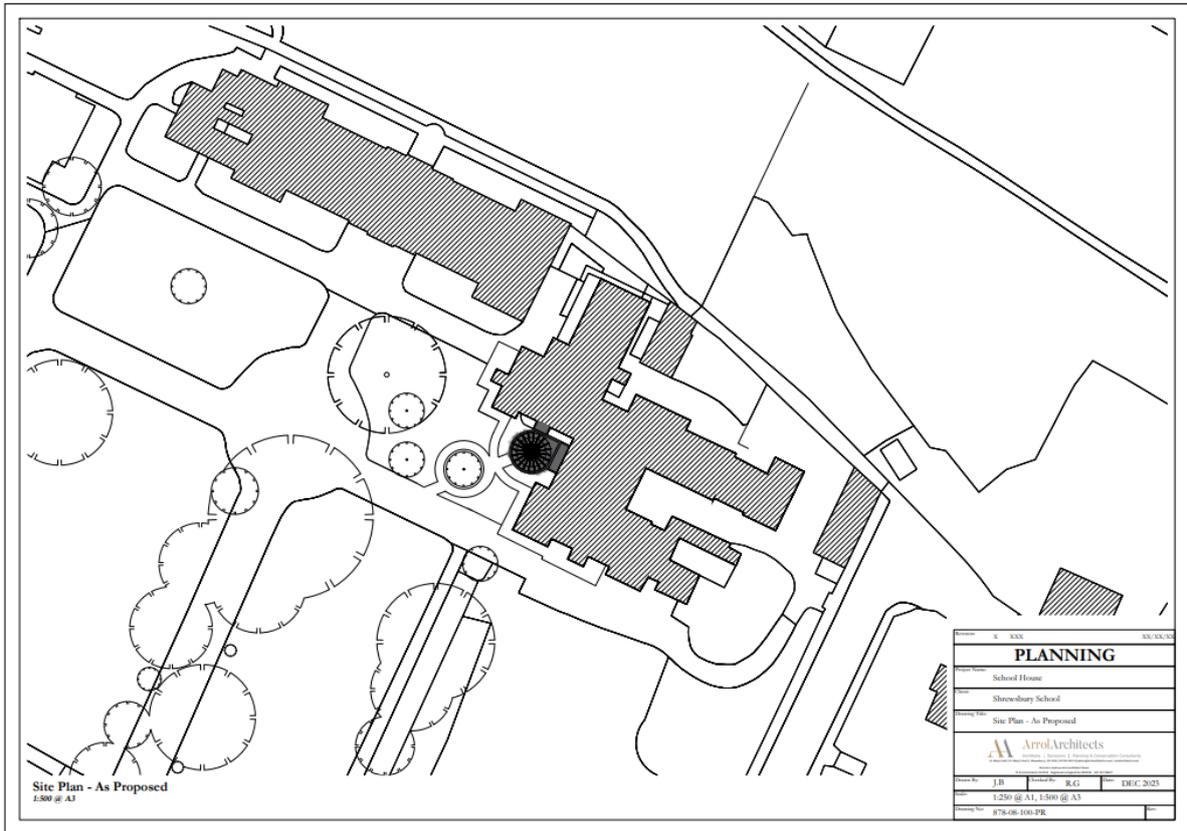
The buildings

The Foundling Hospital, the main school building (Listed Grade II, NHLE 1271368), was built in 1759-65 to the design of Thomas Farnolls Pritchard. It was remodelled for the school in 1879-82 by the architect A.W. Blomfield, who added detailing and new fenestration in the Queen Anne style. He also built School House (Listed Grade II, NHLE 1271348), also with Queen Anne style detailing and the date 1882 amongst re-used earlier armorial stained glass in the front door (Newman and Pevsner 2006, 540-542).

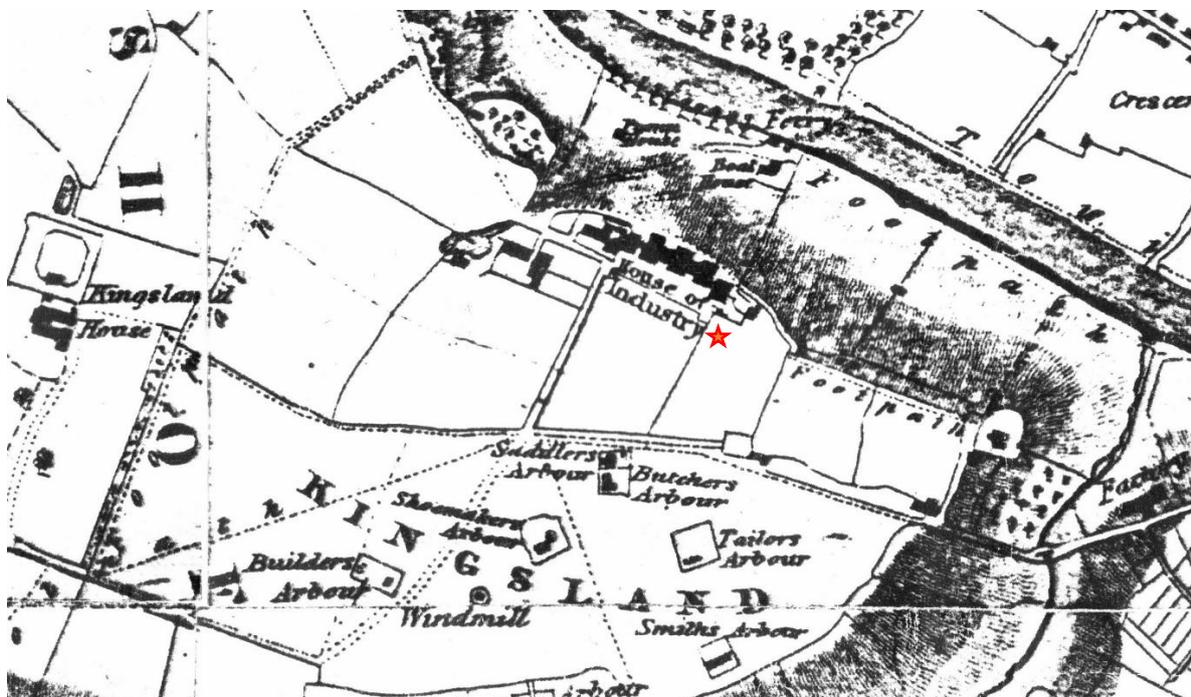
Below-ground conditions

There do not appear to have been any previous recorded archaeological interventions in the immediate vicinity of the school's main buildings. As a result, there is no information from which the depth and character of the made-ground around School House can be predicted. All that can be guessed on present information is that a sandy subsoil, over Keele Beds sandstone bedrock at unknown depth, will be present, and that any excavation next to a complex institutional building with multiple domestic functions such as School House, will be

likely to disclose generations of past and present buried service routes. The building seems to have been built on a green-field site in 1879-82 (fig. 3).



1. Location plan of the work (Arrol Architects) showing the proposed School House foyer in darker tone



2. Extract from Hitchcock's Map of the Borough of Shrewsbury, 1832, showing Kingsland, the House of Industry and the craft guilds' arbours on the common land



3 and 4. Kingsland surveyed in 1879 (top), revised 1925 (above). In the earlier map, Shrewsbury School has yet to move in, the rebuilding of the workhouse building is in progress, School House is newly-built, and a tramway is bringing in bricks from a nearby brick pit; some of the Shrewsbury Show's craft-guild arbour sites are still distinguishable but are not identified. By 1925 Ashton Road and Kennedy Road have been added and built up and School House has been extended to the north and north-east (O.S. 1st and 3rd ed. 1:2,500, source: NLS)

Part 2: general standards and guidance for the conduct of the watching-brief

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) defines a watching-brief as:

A formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons within a specified area or site (land-based, inter-tidal or underwater), where there is the possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive.

The purpose, as defined by the CIfA, of a watching-brief is to:

Allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works

And to:

Provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard

The CIfA Code of Conduct and Code of Approved Practice will be followed throughout.

CIfA Standards & Guidance for an Archaeological Watching-brief (December 2014, revised June 2020) will be followed throughout.

Photographic recording will be by means of high resolution (15k dpi) colour digital photography. Photographs will normally include a scale bar.

Significant archaeological features and deposits will be recorded either by hand-drawn plans, sections and elevations (at 1:20 or 1:10 as appropriate) or by fully digital means (3D data-capture by overlapping digital photography). The location of the works will be recorded at 1:50, or digitally. Archaeological deposits and structures will also be recorded via A4 proforma sheets (context sheets); skeletal remains, should they be exposed, will also be fully recorded. Any significant variation on these conditions will be agreed with the client, their agents and with Shropshire Council.

Reporting and archiving

An illustrated report on the work will be prepared within three months of the completion of the last fieldwork and submitted to the client and Shropshire Council. Or, should significant archaeological material be found (for example, requiring specialist advice or reporting), within six months of completion. In the event of archaeological remains of exceptional significance being found, a longer timetable for completion will be negotiated with the client and with the Council. Report copies will be submitted digitally to the client

and to the county Historic Environment Record; printed/bound copies will be submitted to the H.E.R. and otherwise as directed.

In general, this practice operates a 'small sites' policy in which no unpublished digital archives are held: all photographs taken during the watching-brief (or the best examples of them) are included in the published contractor report. Written notes made during the process are contained in an ongoing site notebook which forms part of the practice's working records and are clearly identified as archival material.

Found objects

All finds (objects) will be cleaned, bagged, labelled and recorded. It is this practice's policy to return any finds to the site owner after recording them in full and photographing them for the report, unless they are of such significance as to suggest that deposition with the County Museums Service would be appropriate, in which case this will be discussed with the site owner. A deposition fee would be charged by the County Museums Service.

Any objects found that fall within the scope of the Treasure Act 1996 will be notified to the client, the coroner and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The provisions of the Code of Practice to the 1996 Act (DCMS, 2nd revision) will be followed.

Human remains

Human remains are a possibility on this site. While the burial ground of the Kingsland Pest House appears to have been c.200m to the west of School House, in the 16th century and possibly long before, Kingsland was an historic execution site (see part I, above), and the gallows site remains unlocated. The burial ground of the House of Industry too may be in the vicinity. While the discovery of human bone in 1960 on the bank below the chapel was attributed to the Pest House (see Part I, above), this identification is not secure and it highlights the lack of certainty or detail in all the relevant historical references. In the event that such remains are encountered, Ministry of Justice procedures will be followed in full, the work halted and the client/agents informed. The archaeologist is also receptive to the potential educational value, in this context, of any such discoveries.

Health & Safety

This document assumes that the archaeological watching-brief will be taking place within an active construction site to which the general public does not have access. Any Health & Safety procedures in force will be followed. Full personal protective gear will be worn by the archaeologist while on site.

Insurance

The archaeologist has public liability insurance (maximum: £5m public liability) to carry out or work within excavations to a maximum depth of 3 metres; he also holds current professional indemnity insurance. Details can be provided on request.

Site staff qualifications

The archaeologist (Dr N Baker FSA), writing this WSI is a member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA) with *areas of competence* in excavation and the recording of standing buildings. He has upwards of thirty-five years' experience of archaeological watching-briefs, has worked in Shrewsbury on and off since 1978 and is the author of *Shrewsbury, an archaeological assessment of an English border town* (Oxbow 2010).

References

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